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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 2 July 2010, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Ali ..... (Malaysia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

High-level policy dialogue with international financial and trade institutions (E/2010/50, 72 and 73; E/2010/NGO/66)

1. **Mr. Sha** Zukang (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs), acting as the moderator, said that the world economy had contracted by 2 per cent in 2009 and was expected to grow by 3 per cent in 2010 and 3.1 per cent in 2011. The pace of recovery, while encouraging, was insufficient to have a significant impact on the employment market; and without jobs, there could not be a quick recovery in private consumption and investment demand. Moreover, recovery was unevenly shared by developed countries, many of which were growing far below their potential, and was inherently fragile, being driven by fiscal-stimulus measures taken by the major economic Powers. Unless the factors conspiring against fast, sustainable recovery were addressed, the world could expect a protracted period of low economic growth and would run the risk of "double-dip" recession.

2. His Department's *World Economic and Social Survey 2010* highlighted four areas requiring urgent action. First, top priority should be given to dealing with the job crisis, in particular through incentives to create productive employment; second, greater efforts should be made to ensure progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and, to that end, to meet commitments to official development assistance; third, improved emergency financing mechanisms, including liquidity buffers, must be put in place; and fourth, there was a need to strengthen international policy coordination. He invited participants to give their views on the steps needed to achieve progress on those four fronts.

3. Deregulated markets and private initiatives alone could not solve the problem of widespread poverty: effective Government institutions and social policies were required, tailored to each country's specific circumstances and based on country ownership of development strategies. In concluding, he recalled the goals of the world summit on sustainable development to be held in 2012 and the resulting need to focus on values and concrete plans that would protect the fragile global environment.

4. **Mr. Panitchpakdi** (Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)) said that the nascent economic recovery now taking shape was very fragile and uneven, since rather than being driven by self-propelling growth, it was dependent on stimulus measures. In order to develop appropriate policies, it was important to understand the many complexities associated with the current situation and likely future developments.

5. First, although fiscal-stimulus measures might have been expected to lead to an upturn in consumer demand, which was a prerequisite for any real recovery, consumption remained weak, as households in major economies continued to unwind the debt they had built up. Since that process was not facilitated by strong employment, it could take at least another two or three years to be completed.

6. Second, while the financial sector had recovered to some extent, it was not supporting growth in the real economy, since banks in most economies had become risk-averse and lending had not recovered to pre-crisis levels.

7. Third, stimulus spending had not had the expected Keynesian multiplier effects, since most measures had targeted non-productive sectors rather than being channelled into areas leading to job creation. Efforts were now being made to ensure that any further stimulus measures targeted productive sectors.

8. Fourth, although many experts had predicted that the massive fiscal expenditure undertaken in response to the sub-prime-mortgage crisis would subsequently lead to a crisis in public finance as countries increased their national debt to finance the stimulus measures, that crisis had in fact been deeper than anticipated. The public-finance crises seen in Europe were highly contagious and could lead to increased financial instability around the world.

9. Fifth, the fragility of the recovery was highlighted by the fact that it was largely driven by trade growth, with no corresponding rise in domestic demand.

10. Lastly, it was proving harder for the Group of Twenty (G-20) countries to coordinate their exit strategies than it had been to agree on the original stimulus measures; a lack of coordination could exacerbate destabilizing financial factors around the world, leading to sharp exchange-rate fluctuations and the absence of a harmonized recovery. Furthermore, it

was surprising that there had not been a greater emphasis on trade and its role as a driver of development at the recent G-20 Summit in Toronto, bearing in mind the trade-led nature of the recovery.

11. All those factors would affect the global economy. Below-average growth rates, including in developing countries, did not bode well for the achievement of the MDGs. Many more people could fall into extreme poverty or become malnourished as a result of the structural defects described. In addition, many of the jobs being created, particularly in European countries, were in the informal sector, where employment was notoriously precarious and low paid; according to the International Labour Organization, some 200 million workers could join the ranks of the working poor as a result of the global crisis.

12. In considering what needed to be done to minimize the impact of the crisis, particularly in relation to the MDGs, it was important to recognize, first, that, although more resources were certainly needed in order for those Goals to be achieved, it was almost impossible to expect most developed countries to fulfil their Gleneagles commitments at present, owing to the dire state of their public finances. Developing countries therefore needed to identify additional sources of funding, including remittances, which had been less affected by the financial crisis than other flows; domestic mobilization of resources through more effective fiscal policies, national development banking or microcredit systems, or partnerships with the private sector; and increased South-South economic cooperation and investment.

13. Second, measures such as investment to support small-scale producers; the establishment of guaranteed employment schemes; and investments in education linked to job creation should be taken in order to ensure that economic growth was inclusive since, in countries characterized by income inequalities, growth could sometimes lead to a deterioration in the situation of vulnerable people. The role of the State should also be strengthened in some areas, for example, agricultural investment, industrial policy, carbon-neutral policies and green investment, as a wholly market-dependent system would not result in inclusive growth and employment creation.

14. Third, international cooperation was vital not only to raise financial assistance but also to ensure a more balanced treatment of social and economic goals, by improving the coherence of investments made in social and economically productive areas. Investment in education, for example, needed to be accompanied by investment in job creation so that a more educated population would have access to suitable employment opportunities.

15. Lastly, a forum should be established to assess the development effectiveness of aid from the perspective of beneficiary countries, by monitoring levels of official development assistance, its countercyclicality and the extent to which it enabled countries to pursue their development strategies.

16. **Mr. Moghadam** (Director, Strategy, Policy and Review Department, International Monetary Fund (IMF)) said that, although the recovery was still fragile and uneven, it was important to recall that just 18 months earlier the world economy had stood at the brink of a global depression. Multilateral action, in the form of coordinated stimulus measures, coordinated actions by central banks, collective measures to address the financial sector's problems, and a continued commitment to free trade, as well as the provision of financing for emerging and developing countries through IMF, the World Bank and the multilateral development banks, had helped put the economy back on a recovery path. Continued multilateral cooperation was also the solution to the ongoing economic fragility; in that connection, a commitment to work together and establish frameworks for joint action had been evident at the recent G-20 Summit in Toronto, despite the issues mentioned by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD.

17. It was encouraging to note that, although some low-income countries certainly faced debt vulnerabilities, which such mechanisms as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative sought to address, the number of countries facing such vulnerabilities had not increased during the current crisis. It should be stressed, however, that developing countries needed investment to maintain and increase their growth. Concessional lending was the traditional avenue for such investment. While many advanced economies had committed themselves to maintaining and increasing development spending, despite their own constrained fiscal positions, developing countries would probably still need to rely more on non-concessional lending in the current situation. The capacity of low-income countries to manage debt and investment should therefore be built up, in order for them to

accommodate the shift to non-concessional lending. The international community could focus on such capacity-building in coming years.

18. Lastly, good global governance was a prerequisite for effective multilateralism. In that regard, IMF had taken a first step towards the realignment of quotas, and was actively debating further measures to strengthen its governance structures and so bring about more effective cooperation and multilateralism.

19. **Mr. Canuto** (Vice-President, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network, World Bank) said that he agreed with previous speakers' analysis of the current situation and the critical role played by multilateralism in averting a global depression. However, although many developing countries had coped surprisingly well with the crisis in terms of maintaining healthy fiscal positions, the crisis had still had a major impact on the poor. According to World Bank estimates, 64 million more people in developing countries would fall into extreme poverty in 2010 as a result of the financial crisis. Furthermore, many of the strategies adopted by poor people to cope with the crisis, such as taking children out of school, not seeking proper health care or reducing their nutritional intake, had very long-term consequences.

20. Against that backdrop, it was important to ensure that the crisis did not distract attention from achieving the MDGs, particularly at the current critical juncture. The mutual-accountability compact that was at the heart of efforts to attain the MDGs must also be reaffirmed; in other words, advanced countries should ensure that they met their commitments in the areas of trade, aid and debt relief, despite their current fiscal problems; aid recipients should honour their commitment to good governance; and multilateral institutions should become more representative and responsive to the whole range of stakeholders. Contributions to the International Development Association replenishment process were a vital way to ensure that low-income countries under stress would receive appropriate funding to cope with the direct consequences of the shocks they had experienced. Lastly, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD was right to propose the urgent development of mechanisms to evaluate the impact of development aid and identify which policies were most effective. The World Bank was devoting considerable efforts to building up knowledge in that regard.

21. **Mr. Boonekamp** (Director, World Trade Organization (WTO)) said that he concurred with much of what the previous speakers had said. As the WTO Director-General had stated at the recent G-20 Summit in Toronto, it was necessary in the current situation to stimulate economic growth and employment creation without putting more strain on the fiscal situation. That could be achieved through trade, which was now recovering strongly following a sharp contraction in 2009. Multilateralism, and in particular the multilateral trading system, had proved to be of real merit in the current crisis. Fears that countries would resort to protectionism had proved largely groundless; although there had been a slight increase in protectionist measures in the past year, it had affected only 0.4 per cent of world trade. However, although trade was leading the economic recovery at present, it could not do so alone; coherent economic-policy strategies were also needed.

22. Although the very slow pace of progress towards completion of the Doha Development Round was frustrating, the work was in fact now 80 per cent complete. In order to break the current impasse, negotiators, empowered by their Governments at the recent G-20 Summit, needed to start exchanging concessions, adopt realistic expectations and so bring the Round to a conclusion. That would create the necessary confidence for a more solid and stable economic recovery. Convinced that a conclusion of the Round was both possible and necessary, he expressed the hope that such an outcome could be achieved in 2011.

23. **Ms. Francis** (Executive Director, International Trade Centre (ITC)) said that she supported the push for trade as a stimulus for development; aid-for-trade initiatives were particularly important. In order to achieve the MDGs, the international community needed to focus its efforts on those actions with the greatest multiplier effect. Since 70 per cent of the world's poor were women, any solutions to current challenges must not only be inclusive but also proactive in redressing that imbalance. It should also be noted that the informal sector was dominated by women; in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, women accounted for 60 per cent of non-agricultural and non-agro-industry self-employment.

24. In that regard, ITC supported multilateral coordinated action to help businesses become more competitive; address the question of access to credit,

especially for women-owned businesses; and modernize the distribution and trade facilitation infrastructure to enhance the flow of goods and services. That was particularly critical in the case of the least developed countries, which had experienced a 34.2 per cent decline in the value of trade since the onset of the crisis. Greater market transparency was also required in order to facilitate business and policy decision-making, especially by least developed countries, which relied to a large extent on mirror data to understand their exports.

25. Lastly, she agreed with the Secretary-General of UNCTAD that economic and social goals must be balanced; in order to achieve sustainable development, it was important both to create sustainable jobs and to reduce poverty. To that end, countries must take ownership for their own development goals; balance them with their trade objectives; and receive adequate financial support, as described by the panellists.

26. **Mr. Yakovenko** (Russian Federation) said that the current high-level policy dialogue, which was an important element of the overall strategy to strengthen the engagement of the United Nations with international financial and trade institutions, had assumed particular significance in the light of the current economic and financial crisis. While his delegation agreed with the panellists' assessment of the current economic situation, it was particularly concerned about the $2.3 trillion in bad assets that remained in the financial system, as well as the high risk of a decline in real estate prices, which could affect the balance sheets of some major banks and lead to a fresh wave of the crisis. Given the high levels of unemployment and low domestic demand seen in leading Western economies, their growth model needed to be reassessed; otherwise recovery would merely constitute a return to an unstable model of global development. Good linkages should also be established between the current discussions and those of the Group of Eight (G-8), G-20 and other economic forums.

27. **Mr. Gutiérrez** (Peru) said that many countries had entered into regional free-trade agreements out of frustration that no agreement had been reached in the nine years since the launch of the Doha Development Round; according to the WTO website, 90 per cent of the 462 regional trade agreements notified to WTO as of February 2010 were free-trade agreements. While his delegation was convinced of the importance of concluding the Doha Round, he would be grateful if the representatives of UNCTAD and WTO could explain how such a multiplicity of bilateral and multilateral free-trade agreements could be incorporated within the structured system envisaged by that Round.

28. **Mr. Herowan** (Observer for Indonesia) said that, despite the encouraging signs of an improvement in the global economy, the recovery remained uneven, fragile and vulnerable to further shocks. Furthermore, recovery was elusive for many developing countries, as limited fiscal space and a lack of development financing hindered progress towards economic recovery and the MDGs. Against that backdrop, coordinated policy measures were needed to create financial-market stability and drive stronger and more sustainable world growth. Such policies should also aim to promote new sources of growth, especially through stimulating trade and investment. In that connection, a conclusion of the Doha Development Round would not only facilitate faster trade flows but also promote economic growth and employment creation.

29. It was also important to acknowledge that there was no "one-size-fits-all" strategy to recovery, since while some countries needed to implement exit strategies and engage in fiscal consolidation, followed by structural reform, other countries with more fiscal room for manoeuvre should maintain economic-stimulus measures to stimulate growth. Efforts should also be made to ensure that short-term economic-recovery strategies did not hinder the pursuit of long-term economic sustainability.

30. The current system, in which international economic policies relating to trade, finance, employment and investment were dealt with by separate specialized international institutions, often led to global difficulties and systemic incoherence. The international community should therefore seek to develop an effective global coordination mechanism for economic and financial issues as part of its measures to strengthen and protect the global economy from future crises. In the absence of such a mechanism, the G-20 had served as a vehicle for coordination among its members and, despite its shortcomings, had improved the coherence of their economic and financial policy direction and action.

31. **Mr. St. Aimee** (Saint Lucia) said that it was unclear how funds for the achievement of the MDGs

could be mobilized from additional sources, bearing in mind that migrant workers who sent remittances to Caribbean countries were increasingly facing unemployment; Governments were already doing what they could to raise domestic revenue; and the private sector was very limited in many developing countries. Secondly, he asked the IMF representative to further explain his comments about the debt vulnerabilities of developing countries, since they seemed to suggest some complacency about the current situation. Thirdly, with regard to the role of the agricultural sector in development, he would like to know whether agro-industry was considered to be part of that sector.

32. **Ms. Dunlop** (Brazil) said that the developing world, which had not been responsible for the economic and financial crisis, was suffering a disproportionate impact. More people were hungry and unemployed and, although developing countries were recovering quite quickly in general terms, there were profound disparities within and between States. Moreover, most developing countries did not have the fiscal space needed to implement social policies to offset the crisis.

33. The crisis had made achievement of the MDGs by 2015 less likely. In the run-up to the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals in September 2010, a clear political message must be sent, implementation gaps closed and the Goals achieved. Specifically, the global partnership, which had a bearing on all areas of development, must be bolstered. Financing for development must be mobilized, given shortfalls in official development assistance, despite the commitments made at Gleneagles.

34. Brazil was committed to a balanced outcome of the Doha Round, one based on development that would mobilize resources to achieve the Goals. Developed countries must eliminate agricultural-export subsidies and make large reductions in domestic supports, and provide enhanced access to markets, in order to promote self-sustaining and long-term development in areas of the world with the most pressing social problems.

35. The international community must take proactive steps to avoid a new debt crisis in the developing world because even developed countries were not immune to debt overhang.

36. Policy coordination and coherence were key to collective action. Recovery could draw on the frameworks of the G-20, and the Economic and Social Council could also play a positive role, thanks to its specific mandate and wide remit.

37. **Ms. Spatolisano** (Observer for the European Union) said that, despite uncertainty, sovereign debt distress and financial-sector vulnerabilities, the outlook for growth was improving, especially in emerging economies.

38. The G-20 had shown it was the leading forum for international economic cooperation and had become stronger. It had agreed to fiscal targets in order to cut budget deficits and to stabilize or reduce debt ratios, which would require structural reforms that would also bolster credibility. Fiscal consolidation, which must be expenditure-based to support economic growth, along with country-specific adjustment, would provide fiscal exit strategies.

39. Confronted with rising unemployment, Governments must not implement short-term protectionist measures. Although open-trade policies were good for growth, social policies must address unemployment and education and retraining. The G-20 and the European Union had coordinated efforts to prevent a protectionist response to the crisis.

40. **Mr. Olquist** (Observer for Nicaragua), Minister of National Policies, said that the crisis would not be over until the impact it had had on employment and on the number of hungry people had been reversed. What was needed, especially in the least developed and highly indebted poor countries, was not an increase in the official development aid provided by developed countries but greater global liquidity, achievable with an emission of special drawing rights such as in 2009.

41. The counter-cyclical stimulus needed to avoid a "double-dip" recession could not easily be reconciled with the fiscal austerity necessary to cut sovereign debt. Moreover, global problems would require more than one single solution. But first, the political impasse that was preventing progress in the form of a conclusion to the Doha Round or the signing of a climate-change agreement must be overcome.

42. Rather than simply a lack of political will, there was a structural crisis owing to the model of growth itself. Globalization had been too fast, the market was too dominant, the State was too weak, regulation was

too impotent, speculation was too profitable, the virtual economy was too strong, financial capital was too hegemonic, investment was too short-term, the money supply was too astronomic, the reserve currency was too undisciplined, debt was too staggering, trade imbalances were too chronic and political power was too concentrated.

43. Globalization without global institutions was leading to chaos and it was agreed that multilateralism would avoid that. However, ad hoc groups such as the Group of Seven (G-7) or the G-20 were anti-democratic and had no legal status; the rich must not decide what was best for all. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council should play a leading role in finding multilateral solutions. That would not be easy but the structural problems underlying the crises must be faced if they were to be overcome.

44. **Mr. Sambili** (Observer for Kenya), Permanent Secretary, Ministry of State for Planning, National Development and Vision 2030, said that although sub-Saharan African countries had not been affected by the first round of the financial and economic crisis, the second round had badly affected the important areas of tourism and demand for goods in Western markets. A way forward must be found that would stimulate those countries; remittances alone would not support the recovery of their economies. Unfortunately, there was little clarity regarding the measures being taken and there was no clear path towards a sustainable recovery.

45. There must be a greater commitment of resources to developing countries, as a domestic mobilization of funds was not a tenable solution to the crisis.

46. **Mr. Khosa** (Pakistan), Minister in Charge and Adviser to the Prime Minister on Information Technology, said multilateralism was definitely the way out of the crisis, and that it must be transparent, inclusive and centred on the United Nations. Also, the effectiveness of aid must be assessed and audited. A stronger Development Cooperation Forum framework would enable developing countries to achieve the MDGs.

47. The following principles must be applied: a people-centred approach to development was needed, as were full national ownership and leadership of development strategies; efforts must be adapted to countries' needs as "one size did not fit all"; adequate and predictable financial flows were necessary, with the flexibility to protect against exogenous shocks; aid effectiveness required the full accountability of donors and recipients; and there must be a scientific and comprehensive understanding of countries' vulnerability caused by climate change.

48. The United Nations must put in place coordinated and multilateral strategies to end the recession and provide a stimulus to improve the economies of the developing world.

49. **Mr. Supachai** (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) said that World Trade Organization (WTO) rules called for the proliferating regional trade agreements to be assessed but often such agreements did not allow the relevant committee to do so. Some regional trade agreements did comply with WTO rules, and indeed their spread was inevitable as they helped ensure market access and South-South trade cooperation. Markets were thus experimenting with greater competition and such agreements were not negative unless there were very different levels of development among their members. However, multilateralism, at the level of WTO, was the most effective approach to international trade.

50. Remittances had not fallen much in 2009 as a result of the recession. Despite the fall in official development assistance, by keeping migrants in employment, host countries indirectly ensured a resource for migrants' home countries, and that resource could be enhanced. Furthermore, the developing countries should be supported in their request for mobility in the negotiations on services at WTO, as that would guarantee them a reliable source of remittances.

51. After a crisis, macroeconomic policies should be driven not by anti-inflationary goals but by development. There must be domestic demand, boosted not only by consumption but by investment, which would grow if the corporate sector would put more into savings, encouraged by the right policies.

52. **Mr. Boonekamp** (World Trade Organization (WTO)) said it was worth noting that the sole agreement reached as part of the Doha Development Agenda was actually on regional trade agreements. Under the WTO transparency mechanism, information must be available on the regional trade agreements that had been notified to WTO. Those agreements posed a threat to the multilateral trading system because they discriminated against trade with non-members. It was

difficult for regional trade agreements to be net trade creating, which was the foundation of the multilateral trade system, and that was why WTO members required the transparency mechanism and detailed reviews.

53. Efforts to ensure complementarity and consistency of regional trade agreements with WTO rules must be improved but there had not been a satisfactory history of reviewing and monitoring their compliance. The WTO rule that stipulated that substantially all trade must be covered by agreements was vague, might apply differently to the regional trade agreements and could allow certain sectors, such as agriculture, to be excluded. Agreements that covered a broad spectrum of trade must be reached at the multilateral, not the regional, level because regional agreements were concerned with market access rather than more complex issues such as subsidies in agriculture.

54. Trade was leading the way to recovery. While it was not a cure-all, trade allowed States to allocate their resources appropriately. However, trade was only part of what must be an entire package designed to create the necessary conditions for growth. If Governments committed themselves to completing the Doha Development Round they would build confidence and boost recovery.

55. **Mr. Moghadam** (International Monetary Fund) said that, in terms of debt vulnerabilities in developing countries, although they had fared better than in past crises, debt had risen. However, the degree of debt stress had not increased.

56. Continuation of that state of affairs was, however, contingent on a continued recovery, based on suitable macroeconomic policies, and on the implementation by developing countries of domestic policies to create fiscal space that would be conducive to recovery.

57. **Mr. Canuto** (World Bank) said that at the World Bank, a gender-action plan had been mainstreaming the gender dimension in everything the Bank did. The infrastructure projects it supported had a gender angle, in whatever field they were located. The lack of infrastructure in developing countries was not gender-neutral and the International Development Association's 2010 replenishment negotiations had gender mainstreaming at their core.

58. Remittances could not be discussed without taking migration into account. Increasingly, migration had become a South-South issue, with migrants moving among and not only away from developing countries. There was growing interest in home and destination countries in policies that affected migration. No longer a taboo subject, all actors involved were studying how to improve migrants' conditions.

59. It was worth remembering that although the crisis had not been caused by the developing countries, their capacity for recovery depended on the quality of their macroeconomic management.

The meeting was suspended at 12.20 p.m. and resumed at 12.35 p.m.

Adoption of the ministerial declaration (E/2010/L.8)

60. **The President** introduced a minor editorial correction to paragraph 14 of the draft text (E/2010/L.8).

61. *The ministerial declaration (E/2010/L.8), as orally corrected, was adopted.*

62. **Mr. Al-Shami** (Observer for Yemen), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, welcomed the adoption of the timely and important document, which would provide valuable inputs to the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly, at its sixty-fifth session, on accelerating progress towards the achievement of the MDGs by 2015. Having adopted a united front in its active and constructive engagement during negotiations, the Group of 77 reaffirmed its commitment to the promotion of and respect for human rights for all, including women and girls.

63. **Mr. de Bassompierre** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, welcomed adoption of the declaration, after swift negotiations carried out in a conducive atmosphere.

64. **The President**, closing the high-level segment, said that the Council had sent a clear message that gender equality and the empowerment of women were at the core of development and that neglecting them would have serious implications for all development priorities.

65. Member States had shared their efforts to achieve the MDGs and their presentations had contained several key messages. Gender equality was vital to

achievement of the Goals and would lead to flourishing economies and more peaceful societies. Investing in women and girls affected achievement of all the Goals and must be at the centre of the outcome of the forthcoming High-level Plenary Meeting. Greater attention must be given to maternal health and reproductive rights, and to women's participation in decision-making. Gender mainstreaming was crucial to development and economic growth and men must work with women to promote equality and empowerment for women. Men and boys must be part of the urgent and necessary work to end violence against women.

66. Countries were urged to volunteer to give national presentations at the annual ministerial review.

67. African Governments had been encouraged to adopt a wider perspective on the challenges to progress in issues related to women and health, and there had been widespread interaction during the dialogue on "The role of women in countries in special situations". Women must participate fully in all stages of peacemaking, peacebuilding, reconstruction and long-term development, and gender perspectives must be mainstreamed in all humanitarian and development programmes.

68. The work of the Development Cooperation Forum had become urgent as the number of relevant actors had increased dramatically in the context of recovery from the crises and implications for aid architecture.

69. **Mr. Sha** Zukang (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs), congratulating the Council on its adoption of the ministerial declaration, reiterated the importance of the fifteen-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the High-level Plenary Meeting in September 2010.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

In the absence of Mr. Ali (Malaysia), Mr. Cujba (Moldova), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

General debate (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Rahman** (Bangladesh), said that in 1973, Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had set quotas for the number of women in civil service. Since his assassination in 1975, however, that policy had been ignored until its reinstatement by his daughter, current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. At present, the Prime Minister, the Deputy Leader of the House, five ministers and the leader of the Opposition were women. Of the 345 seats in Parliament, 45 were reserved for women and at present, there were 64 women parliamentarians. There were women Supreme Court judges, permanent secretaries and senior officers in the police and the military. The Constitution guaranteed women's equality within a broad framework of democracy and non-discrimination on grounds of religion, race or gender and the Government was determined to overcome bigoted obscurantism and to secure equal rights and opportunities for women.

2. His Government endorsed the outcome documents of the relevant international conferences and had taken steps to meet its international obligations in the area of gender equality. It had adopted a National Policy for Women's Advancement and a related Plan of Action. Policies for the empowerment of women were monitored by the Women's Development Implementation Committee, headed by the Minister for Women and Children Affairs. Gender-responsive budgeting had been introduced for the 2011 fiscal year and development planning took gender issues into account. A Female Formed Police Unit, deployed to Haiti in May 2009, was proof that the women of his country participated in conflict resolution, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation as mandated in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security.

3. The primary and secondary school enrolment rates were higher for girls than for boys; at the secondary school level, girls received tuition waivers and stipends. Since 2008, domestic violence legislation had been adopted and the women of Bangladesh had been permitted to transmit their nationality to their children. The Government provided microcredit and product display centres for women and hired more women than men for rural public works projects. The Vulnerable Group Development Programme provided skill training and loans for simple capital machinery such as sewing machines — so that women could set up their own enterprises. Older and poor women were eligible for allowances and shelter and working women for dormitories and day care centres; the latter efforts, however, needed to be scaled up.

4. The economic downturn and climate change had further threatened the already insufficient resources allocated to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) while raising the level of need. He urged the developed countries to make their promised contribution of 0.7 per cent of gross national income (GNI), including 0.2 per cent for the least developed countries.

5. **Mr. Errázuriz** (Chile) said that his delegation welcomed the establishment of the Women's Empowerment Principles under the United Nations Global Compact; the recommendations made in the resolution on women's economic empowerment, adopted at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, of which Chile had been a sponsor; and the adoption of General Assembly resolution 64/289, which had established a composite United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, to be known as UN Women. He hoped that the new entity would soon be operational and would receive sustainable funding.

6. During its bicentennial year, Chile reaffirmed its commitment to implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action. The President had made it a priority to overcome the adverse effects of the February earthquake, eliminate poverty, ensure equality of opportunity and achieve developed country status by the end of the current decade. Accordingly, the National Women's Service (SERNAM) would focus during the period 2010-2014 on achieving the goal of gender parity in the workforce by removing obstacles to women's entry into the labour market and creating new jobs. An emergency reconstruction programme entitled "Women, Let Us Lift Chile" and a Presidential Advisory Commission on Women, Work and Motherhood had been established in April. The Commission included experts and representatives of trade unions and the business

community. Its goals were to ensure optimum care for children, make the costs of motherhood irrelevant to women's recruitment and make it easier for women and men to combine work and family life. To that end, the Government planned to promote modernization of the existing labour legislation.

7. The country's gender-based pension system recognized the contribution of domestic work and motherhood and entitled all Chilean women, including those who had not performed paid work, to a pension and to an additional bonus for each child. The Programme for Women Heads of Household provided after-school care to the children of working mothers and another programme, Chile is Growing with You, provided a childcare network that allowed low-income women to pursue an education or enter the labour market.

8. Steps had been taken to decrease the incidence and increase the reporting of domestic violence. Recent draft legislation on femicide had been given urgent attention and a request for the inclusion of protection measures for the victims of domestic violence had been made. Chile was the first Latin American country to have adopted a plan of action to implement resolution 1325 (2000); the plan included cross-cutting measures designed to protect women and children in armed conflicts and to encourage women to participate in post-conflict peacebuilding and in the restoration of democracy. His Government had high maternal and child health standards and was concerned to note that Goals 4 and 5 of the MDGs were the furthest from achievement.

9. **Ms. Kaur** (India), said that in order to achieve the MDGs by 2015, it was important to ensure that the global economic recovery was balanced and sustainable and to make firm, time-bound commitments for, inter alia, the provision of resources, transfer of technology and capacity-building. It was also important to focus on medium- and long-term structural issues of global governance, to complete the reform of the Bretton Woods institutions, to expand the permanent and non-permanent membership of the Security Council in order to reflect contemporary realities, and to target women in particular so that they could become equal beneficiaries of development gains. He therefore welcomed the establishment of UN Women to provide leadership and mainstream women's issues in the United Nations and hoped that it would soon be operational.

10. India's National Policy for the Empowerment of Women sought to enhance women's economic and political empowerment and give them equal access to health care, education and employment. Nearly half of the 46 million rural households benefiting from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Schemes, one of the world's largest cash-for-work programmes, were women and there were over 2 million women's self-help groups under the Swarnjayanti Gram Rozgar Yojna rural empowerment programme. Saakshar Bharat was a literacy programme targeting 60 million adult women and the new Right to Education Act made education free and compulsory for all children aged 6 to 14 while focusing on girls. Efforts to reduce the maternal and infant mortality rates, which remained unacceptably high, included the Janani Suraksha Yojna cash assistance programme. Other sources of concern were the low ratio of girls to boys in the country, the gender disparity in literacy and employment rates, high maternal and infant mortality rates, and the problem of violence against women.

11. There had been a perceptible improvement in Indian women's social and economic status, but enormous challenges remained to be overcome. Women were participating in greater numbers in the political process and in decision-making structures; the President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the leader of the ruling coalition and over a million elected members of local governments were women. For over 17 years, one third of the seats on village councils had been reserved for women; that proportion would soon be increased to 50 per cent and there were plans to establish similar quotas for Parliament and the state legislatures.

12. **Mr. Barton** (United States of America) said that the equal empowerment of women and men was essential to social and economic progress. He welcomed the conclusion of negotiations on UN Women and looked forward to the selection of a strong, entrepreneurial leader to guide it.

13. His delegation was honoured to have been asked by Brazil, Moldova and the Netherlands to review their thoughtful, candid and far-sighted national voluntary presentations; at the same time, he appreciated the interest in his own country's voluntary presentation and the constructive reviews conducted by Bangladesh, Demark and United Republic of Tanzania. He had also enjoyed the special policy dialogue on the role of women in countries in special situations and had been

pleased to hear the ministers of various countries share their national experiences in mobilizing popular support for gender equality at various forums.

14. His delegation applauded efforts to increase the enrolment rate for girls, promote safe childbirth, reduce trafficking, assist women farmers and increase women's economic independence; the United States welcomed the innovations introduced and experiments conducted throughout the world and was supporting and investing in some of them. Women played a catalytic role in guiding and uniting donor and partner countries' efforts to achieve the MDGs, and there was universal agreement on the need for a holistic approach in which gender equality and women's empowerment were incorporated into each of the Goals.

15. Nearly two thirds of the developing countries had met the goal of eliminating gender disparity in education and the goal of achieving parity in secondary education by 2015 was within reach. Development gains of such magnitude were extraordinary and should be built upon. However, the infant and maternal mortality and child undernutrition rates remained high and women and girls accounted for the majority of the world's poor. They were unschooled, unhealthy and underfed; did most of the work on farms; lacked access to adequate resources, support and training; and were unable to enjoy their rights.

16. His Government's efforts to incorporate gender concerns into its national programmes by driving innovation, investing in sustainability, tracking and evaluating outcomes and reinforcing mutual accountability were illustrated by its US$ 3.5 billion Feed the Future initiative and its US$ 63 billion Global Health Initiative, both of which had been described in his delegation's national voluntary presentation. Those and other initiatives would bring achievement of the MDGs closer to reality.

17. The tenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) would provide an opportunity for Member States to renew their commitment to letting women's voice be heard during conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding. And since gender-based violence was not limited to conflict situations and occurred in every country, it was necessary to change cultural attitudes that accepted violence against women. His Government would continue to support programmes aimed at combating such violence and would work with governments and at the grass-roots level to protect the victims and improve accountability and prevention.

18. **Mr. Al Bayati** (Iraq) said that his country had been one of the first in the region to address issues of women's rights. Indeed, the women's movement in Iraq had coincided with the establishment of the modern State in 1921. Labour Act No. 72 of 1936 had made important advances for working women by giving them equality with men. In 1959, a ministerial portfolio had been given to a woman, who had become a symbol of women's participation in leadership roles.

19. Since 2003, within the framework of democracy, institutions had been established giving women the opportunity to participate in decision-making. The 2005 Constitution focused on a number of important rights, including equality and non-discrimination, equal opportunities, the right to citizenship for the child of an Iraqi mother or father, and the right to participate in public affairs. It also contained a quota for women in the house of representatives. At present, three ministers and two ministers of State were women. Women were also represented in many leadership posts and as experts, counsellors and under-secretaries.

20. Terrorism in the country had left tens of thousands of orphans and widows, which increased the burden on women to support their families. Nonetheless, there had been many positive developments with regard to women's rights. Institutions had been established to care for women and their families, including a Ministry of State and a Parliamentary Commission. There were also many non-governmental organizations in the country working with women and children. The Government had adopted new policies to promote women's affairs and created a community police force to care for female victims of violence. It also granted microcredits to women so they could improve their situation.

21. Iraq respected the role of women and supported their right to work. Such progress was important in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

22. **Ms. Blum** (Observer for Colombia), referring to certain areas that were essential to empower women and ensure their equality, said that the full access of girls and women to education was the first basic requirement. Her own country, having achieved universal coverage in basic education, was now working on expanding secondary education coverage and improving the quality of education which would

eventually include the teaching of equal rights and duties of men and women and training in sexual and reproductive health.

23. Economic empowerment was a second prerequisite for giving women autonomy. Without it, there would be no equality of rights or sustainable development and poverty would not be eradicated. Accordingly, her Government had improved job training and entrepreneurship opportunities for women, and their access to microcredit. It was implementing the Rural Women's Act and an equal employment agenda in cooperation with major business associations. Colombia's action against extreme poverty and its family subsidies had also had an impact. The United Nations as well must continue working to improve the legal and social status of women.

24. A third area was the protection of women against violence. The current Administration, having successfully reduced crime throughout the country, had through its Gender Equality Office given women specific tools for dealing with gender-based violence, while the Congress had passed stronger laws against trafficking in persons and domestic violence and adopted a new comprehensive law on violence against women. It simply supported UNiTE to End Violence against Women, the Secretary-General's campaign, and welcomed the establishment of its database.

25. Priority must also be given to the participation of women in politics. Recent legislation in Colombia had helped bring more women into the executive and legislative branches, although there was room for further improvement.

26. National efforts to achieve gender equality and to empower women needed international support. Colombia welcomed the reform of the General Assembly's gender architecture, and hoped that the new gender entity would be given sufficient political, financial and technical capacity.

27. **Ms. Kalamwina** (Zambia) observed that promoting gender equality was an important element in Zambia's development strategy. The new national development plan that would soon come into effect systematically mainstreamed gender into all sectors. Government bureaux had been given more funds for the economic empowerment of women and Zambia's special economic empowerment fund, gave women preferential treatment.

28. Her Government was also committed to giving women more access to productive resources, such as land, affordable credit, agricultural extension services and appropriate technology; and had also joined forces with the country's financial institutions in addressing some of the hurdles that women entrepreneurs faced. After sectoral surveys, recommendations had been made for advancing women's economic equality in the land and agriculture sectors through the establishment of public institutions like gender focal points throughout the country and at the district level to administer programmes for rural women. In the allocation of titled land, one third was specifically reserved for women as part of the recent land reform.

29. While Zambia had made steady progress in the achievement of the MDG targets, gender-based violence and the feminization of HIV/AIDS still remained major concerns. In the area of education, readmission and scholarship policies made it easier for girls to remain in school and go on to higher education. A gender-mainstreaming strategy within the Government's four-year public service reform programme would increase the political representation of women. At the same time, civil society organizations had been providing training in leadership skills and financial support for women candidates for office.

30. **Mr. Okuda** (Japan), while welcoming the establishment of the new gender entity within the United Nations and the Council's focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women, which were prerequisites for the achievement of all the other Millennium Development Goals, said that further international efforts were needed to bolster action taken by individual Governments.

31. Japan had been resolutely promoting the concept of human security as a pillar of its diplomatic policy, focusing on both the individual and the community and on the protection of the vulnerable, and making gender equality and empowerment of women crucial elements of the policy. Since its 2005 gender development initiative, his Government had been doing everything in its power to mainstream gender into every area and into every phase of its official development assistance (ODA), thus contributing directly to the equality and empowerment of women around the world. Japan was, for example, successfully cooperating with the Government of Yemen to develop the education of girls in that country and had set up a fund within the United Nations to finance a number of projects for women in

precarious situations, such as the one providing comprehensive health, education and financial assistance to women and girls caught in the midst of armed conflict in Nepal. It would also continue to fund maternal and child health care and assist victims of human trafficking.

32. In Japan itself, the participation of women in politics remained quite low, but recent elections had been encouraging and it was making slow but steady progress in that area. Another of its top priorities was to eliminate gender disparities in wages, provide assistance to working women, set rules prohibiting long working hours and establish a proper work-life balance in the family. Its third gender equality plan was due for approval later in the year.

33. As Chair of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Japan would be convening meetings of the networks for women leaders and gender focal points and, with the United States, would host the APEC women's entrepreneurship summit, all of them opportunities to enhance the economic empowerment of women and increase awareness of the economic potential of women.

34. **Mr. Escalona Ojeda** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), observing that his Government sought to build a new model of society based on humanitarian values and the radical transformation of the means of production for the general good, said that his Republic was unique in not having cut its social expenditures despite the recession and disregarding International Monetary Fund (IMF) strictures, in successfully forging its own path towards fulfilment of the MDGs, in order to overcome poverty and inequality.

35. With respect to women, that meant guaranteeing human rights and gender equality and recognizing the full value of women's contributions. A body of legislation — such as the equal opportunity law and the law on violence against women — guaranteed the rights of women in non-sexist and non-discriminatory language, as mandated by the Constitution. Venezuela was a party to the major international and regional instruments relating to women. Among the public programmes on behalf of women, there were shelters for victims of violence, special grants to compensate women for the unrecognized work they did in the home, and a women's development bank that offered easily accessible microcredit to poor women. A people's ministry for women and gender equality with branches throughout the country allowed women to make proposals and discuss their needs collectively.

36. Venezuela also provided free education at all levels on an equal basis to women and men. It had achieved not only gender equality but a higher attendance of women in both primary and secondary education, and the proportion of women in higher education had been steadily increasing. Women's access to high-level political posts had also increased, with women at the helm of four out of five of the major branches of government.

37. **Ms. Nwadinobi** (Observer for Nigeria) said that her Government, aware of the centrality of women to a healthy, stable and prosperous society, had charged the National Agency for Poverty Eradication and similar bodies to pay particular attention to gender equity issues and devise mechanisms responsive to the needs and interests of women. As a result, there had been a marked increase in national strategies to bolster the competitive edge of women, help them become entrepreneurs and involve them more deeply in decision-making. Since 2005, the Government had allocated an additional 5 per cent of the budget to gender issues; and at all levels of government, capacity-building and gender-mainstreaming projects had been set up for women.

38. In the area of education, the efforts to bridge the equality gap were pronounced: the ratio of girls to boys in primary education had continued to rise and female as well as male enrolment at the secondary and higher levels was increasing. Many states of the Nigerian Federation had made school attendance mandatory for all children. In other areas, the proportion of women in public office still fell short of the 30 per cent target, but that of women in non-agricultural paid employment, especially in a decision-making capacity, had continued to improve, thus giving hope of a corresponding improvement in the legislature. Nigeria was also implementing strategies to prevent the pandemics whose burden weighed heaviest on women.

39. Among the development issues that affected women in particular, Governments should put emphasis on funding agricultural development, improving the economic infrastructure, boosting market access, providing more technical assistance and capacity-building, improving outreach to rural women, combating disease, lessening the impact of climate change, scaling up ODA to developing countries and

extending more debt-relief packages to poorer countries.

40. **Mr. Cabactulan** (Philippines), urged the Council, the United Nations and each Member State to take the difficult decisions to move the recent deliberations beyond mere rhetoric. The new Administration in his country, coinciding with the next phase of the medium-term development plan, a national strategy anchored in the MDGs, would pursue their fulfilment with renewed vigour. The recent passage of the Philippine Magna Carta of Women in 2009 had put into one comprehensive law the provisions governing the role that women played in nation-building; it sought to eliminate discrimination against them, in the political, economic, sociocultural, and private domestic spheres; it protected them against violence; and ensured mandatory training in human rights and gender sensitivity for all Government agents in the field.

41. The President had already appointed four women to key ministerial positions in his cabinet — justice, labour and employment, social welfare and development, and the peace process — thus underscoring that there could be no sustainable development without peace, justice and decent jobs for all and that women were in the best position to understand problems in those areas and develop the policies needed.

42. The five themes of the Development Cooperation Forum were also congruent with Philippine interests in a time of declining ODA, which in any case was only one approach to development financing. The Philippines joined the call for a greater role for the Forum in the future.

43. **Mr. Rosenthal** (Guatemala) said that, having amply explained his country's policies and programmes during a recent national voluntary presentation, he now wished to make a few specific points on the theme under consideration.

44. First, the World Economic and Social Survey 2010: *Retooling Global Development* (E/2010/50) provided exactly the conceptual framework needed for rethinking the future course of development action at a time of such fundamental uncertainty and crisis.

45. Secondly, the Council's discussions on gender equality and empowerment of women were an important preparatory exercise for the 2010 High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals (the MDG Summit) that would be held in September; and an exercise that had to do with all the Goals, since poverty and hunger, education and health and the environmental dimension were all intimately linked to the advancement of women. Taking responsibility for achieving the Goals conferred the moral authority to insist on the conditions conducive to their fulfilment.

46. Thirdly, Guatemala joined others in welcoming the establishment of a single gender entity that made the United Nations system more coherent and at the same time put a spotlight on gender equality and empowerment of women in the United Nations agenda.

47. Lastly, the importance of the Council's work required both traditional and new ways of realizing its potential, and the innovative efforts that had been in evidence in recent days were therefore most welcome.

48. **Ms. Mucdin** (Observer, International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that migration could be an important variable in the achievement of gender equality and development. The Beijing Declaration had recognized that poverty compelled many women to migrate in order to provide for their families and that their migration had consequences. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had dealt with the dual discrimination faced by migrant women in its general recommendation No. 26 on women migrant workers and insisted on respect for their human rights as a factor enabling them to contribute to development. It was now acknowledged also that migration could have important ramifications for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, either as a catalyst for development or as a further challenge to it. The migration of health professionals, for instance, was detrimental to women's access to care, especially in the areas of reproductive health, maternal health and the treatment of HIV/AIDS; on the other hand, the billions of dollars in remittances returned to the migrants' families in developing countries provided invaluable help in terms of poverty alleviation, education — especially for girls — and reduction in child mortality.

49. Safe and legal migration, moreover, served to empower women by giving them employment opportunities unavailable at home, thus fostering financial autonomy, a better social status as breadwinner, and decision-making power. The improved status of migrant women was also an opportunity for them to take on non-traditional roles.

50. There was a growing recognition of the role migrants played as agents of development, through their transnational philanthropic activities but also their

involvement in defining the host countries' development policies — in essence creating a partnership for development that brought together migrants and countries of origin and destination in the spirit of Goal 8. The international community should invest more in women's leadership either locally or in the diaspora in order to facilitate their participation in that global partnership.

51. Consideration of gender and migration issues should be systematically included in the discussions at the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals, to be held in September.

52. **Mr. Kalyoncu** (Observer, Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)), noting that securing peace and progress in a society and the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, required the active participation of women, who nevertheless faced overwhelming challenges. Despite the priority given to the rights of women in the international community's agenda, many were still deprived of basic rights and subjected to various forms of violence and discrimination.

53. Violence against women was a shameful crime and must be dealt with by appropriate legislation in all societies. Unfortunately, women were still viewed as secondary beings by many, including some of the self-appointed defenders of women's rights. Such thinking had ancient historical roots. His organization believed that there could be no true humanity without unity between women and men as meaningful parts of a whole.

54. Islam, as a religion of peace and equality, had pioneered the protection of the rights of women: it had stood for their right to education, equal treatment and participation in decision-making as equal partners in society, while at the same time rejecting all forms of violence against them.

55. OIC worked in coordination with the United Nations and other international stakeholders in order to empower women. Its Ten-Year Programme of Action emphasized the advancement of women in Muslim societies in the economic, cultural, social and political fields and called upon member States to revise their respective laws accordingly. Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women stressed gender equality, the empowerment of women and their political, social and economic participation as central to the eradication of poverty and to sustainable development; the desirability of their participation in decision-making at all levels; and the critical role of education in eliminating gender inequality and providing women with socio-economic and political opportunities. In 2008, OIC had launched, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) a businesswomen's information network in the OIC countries, and had established the OIC Women's Centre in Cairo to spearhead their active participation in every aspect of life in the OIC member States.

56. **Mr. Jilani** (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)), said that the Federation's annual World Disasters Report, to be launched later in the year, focused on the urbanization of disasters as a twenty-first century challenge. According to the report, climate change would likely increase the links between urban poverty and disaster risk, and the people and nations least responsible for global warming would face the greatest risks. With strong volunteer support, IFRC was working with city leaders and civil society worldwide to address urban challenges by tackling root causes.

57. IFRC and its member National Societies were increasingly focusing on integrating a gender perspective into its policy framework and operational activities. In Haiti, for example, priority was being given to women's access to health services, including reproductive health; the role of women in agriculture and food security; ensuring land and house tenure and equal employment opportunities and equal pay for women in its operations; and prioritizing single female- and parent-headed households during relief distribution. It had also appointed a delegate to deal with gender-based violence in Haiti, and combating violence and the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse was an integral part of its plan of action.

58. The impact of the global financial crisis and the economic uncertainty on humanitarian and development assistance remained a major concern. Funding for humanitarian aid was failing to keep pace with the growing humanitarian need, and too little was being spent on risk preparedness and reduction and attempts to reduce vulnerabilities.

59. **Ms. DeFrantz** (Observer, International Olympic Committee (IOC)), said that implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of

women was a matter of survival, and the issue of women in sport was directly related to human and social rights. The Olympic Charter stated that every human being must have the possibility of practising sport in accordance with his or her needs, and the United Nations and other international organizations had recognized explicitly that the principle of non-discrimination encompassed the right of all women and girls to engage in sport and physical and recreational activity on an equal basis with men and boys. The International Olympic Committee hoped that the contribution of sport and physical activity would again be recognized and included in the outcome document of the high-level segment.

60. IOC was committed to achieving gender parity: more than 40 per cent of competitors at the Olympic Games were women, and with the addition of women's boxing to the programme of the 2012 Olympic Games in London, women would be competing in every sport at the Summer Games. The IOC Women and Sport Commission provided technical and financial assistance for community-based programmes and skills development, and IOC partnerships with United Nations agencies and programmes, including the United Nations Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, had yielded positive results. While women's access to sporting and recreation was improving, IOC was committed to making progress towards bridging the gap that remained in their access to sport administration and leadership roles.

61. **Mr. Mpotogomyi** (Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)) called for careful consideration and resolute action to address the major gap that still existed in women's politics and governance, which, despite recent progress, still fell far short of the 30 per cent target set in Beijing 15 years ago. Urgent action was needed, particularly in view of the current context of crises, which left women vulnerable and challenged their development.

62. Earlier in the year, IPU had concluded a study on women in parliament, and had produced, with the help of the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, a new edition of the world map on women in politics, which revealed that the world average of women in parliament stood at 19 per cent, up from 11.3 per cent in 1995. Nonetheless, progress had been slow; at the current annual growth rate, the 30 per cent target would not be reached until 2025.

63. Much remained to be done to eliminate discrimination against women, particularly through the institution of quotas and other temporary special measures, the reform of political party selection and recruitment, the elimination of gender stereotypes and violence against women, and the organization of waging systematic, far-reaching awareness campaigns. IPU was focusing on helping parliaments to build a gender-sensitive national legal framework; promote maternal, newborn and child health; and adopt effective national legislation to combat violence against women. It also encouraged them to allocate sufficient resources to those ends.

64. **Mr. Marzano** (International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (IAESCSI)), said that, at a time of crisis, vigorous, global action was needed to ensure that gender equality objectives were met. Such action must be taken by Governments of developed and developing countries alike, by labour and management trough social dialogue and collective bargaining, and by civil society. In industrialized countries, reconciling professional and family life and addressing the salary gap went hand in hand with women's empowerment in the workforce, institutions and society. Developing countries needed to boost education, health and economic activity indicators for women. IAESCSI had adopted gender equality strategy guidelines which focused primarily on sectoral policies in areas where serious inequalities existed, including to education, health, employment and economic activity, migration, fighting violence against women and women's place in society in general. Civil society had a considerable role to play in that regard, and economic and social councils were the ideal forum for monitoring the improvement of gender equality and women's empowerment.

65. **Mr. Ratsifandrihamanana** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)), presenting a joint statement of the FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP), said that a record 1 billion people had been chronically hungry in 2009, with women accounting for more than half of those affected. While women produced half of the world's food and were often the majority of the agricultural workforce, they faced persistent sociocultural and political inequalities and were routinely denied access to productive assets such as

land, water, credit and technology. Following the global food crisis of 2007-2008, the international community had increasingly come to recognize that the achievement of the MDGs depended significantly on improving food security and agricultural and rural development; however, renewed commitments to that end had yet to translate into action.

66. Gender equality and the empowerment of women were a vital component of the work of the Rome-based agencies. FAO, IFAD and WFP initiatives included enhancing women's access to income-earning opportunities and productive assets, improving rural women's access to basic services and infrastructure, strengthening women producers' organizations, providing food assistance in times of crisis and recognizing rural women and men as key stakeholders and powerful actors of change. They also believed that dialoguing with civil society was integral to "getting it right", for example, the FAO Committee on World Food Security gave multi-stakeholders, including women a say in its decision-making process.

67. The Rome-based agencies welcomed the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative — a sign that world leaders had shown a renewed interest in sustainable development and food security investments — and encouraged the international community to take action aimed at increasing investment in food security, agriculture and rural development; promoting productive and social safety nets and eliminating gender imbalances in access to them; implementing effective food security and poverty reduction strategies; strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships and global governance of food security; and improving agriculture, food security and nutrition policies. They called on Member States and the United Nations system to direct attention to gender equality and the role of women in agriculture at forthcoming events, and at the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals, to be held in September.

68. **Ms. Gastaldo** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that the International Labour Conference Resolution concerning gender equality at the heart of decent work, unanimously adopted in June 2009, was the Organization's most comprehensive contribution to gender equality and the empowerment of women. It called on ILO to promote women's equality as a cross-cutting issue in the strategic objectives of its Recent Work Agenda, namely employment, social protection, principles and rights at work, and social dialogue. The resolution also highlighted the role that Governments and employers' and workers' organizations had to play in achieving greater gender equality in the world of work, paying particular attention to the most vulnerable women in society, including indigenous, migrant, minority, young and rural women.

69. Moreover, its Global Jobs Pact, also adopted in 2009, was designed to guide national and international policies aimed at stimulating economic recovery, generating jobs and providing protection to working people and their families, and recognized the need for recovery packages to take into account the differing impacts of the economic crisis on men and women. ILO had plans to set new international labour standards on the issue of decent work for domestic workers and address the vulnerability of women and girls to verbal, physical and sexual violence in that context, adding power to Government efforts in that regard.

70. **Ms. Sarlis** (International Alliance of Women) said that Governments and the relevant intergovernmental organizations should develop national rosters of potential women candidates and ensure that women were fully informed about, and encouraged to apply for, positions in the area of conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation, particularly in senior management. The Alliance also recommended that Government policies on protection in conflict and post-conflict situations should take account of the important role and particular needs of women in girls; that health care, including maternal and mental health care, should be provided to women and girls in post-conflict situations; and that the reconciliation process should protect women's rights. Equally vital were the establishment of accessible and transparent early warning systems with an integrated gender perspective and the financing and empowerment of women's organizations to ensure their participation in building sustainable peace. Cooperation between women's organizations working to achieve sustainable peace in conflict and post-conflict situations and leading political stakeholders should always take place within a political — not a military framework.

71. **Ms. Lear** (HelpAge International) said that there had been a profound demographic change with regard to age and the policies needed to respond to it. Ageing was a women's issue because women accounted for the majority of older people or those who took care them,

and because they were often the victims of ageism and sexism combined. She appealed to Council members and observers and NGO colleagues to occasionally use the phrase "girls and women of all ages" in their reports, statements and speeches.

72. HelpAge International recommended that gender and ageing should be embedded in all aspects of the work of the new United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women); the ageing and its gender aspects should be central to the review of the Millennium Development Goals; that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women should systematically question reporting States parties on the situation of elderly women; and that gender equality should be a key aspect of national 10-reviews of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

73. **Ms. Karmakar** (International Committee for Arab-Israeli Reconciliation) said that financial independence should be an integral part of education for boys and girls starting at the elementary level. In less developed countries, girls tended not to attend school or dropped out. A one-day family planning training course should be mandatory prior to marriage registration in those countries, focusing, inter alia, on the cost of raising children. Girls should be taught that sexual abuse was a crime, and all girls should learn a trade and be adequately compensated for their work; women should be able to count on men to share in family responsibilities.

74. With regard to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), transparency was crucial. Countries should be required to submit annual MDG progress reports to the United Nations, and the relevant data should be verifiable by a third party to enable other nations to duplicate successful measures or avoid failures. In addition, one high-level Government official should be responsible for coordinating and tracking all MDG-related activities, and that person's contact information should be available to the public.

75. **Ms. Sakoh** (World Society for the Protection of Animals) said that animal welfare and the empowerment of rural women of all ages were linked. In developing countries, women were often responsible for the care of farm animals, which provided crucial nutrition for their families and communities, and excess farm animal produce was a major source of income for families. Animals were also relied on for transporting water, food and goods. Preserving and developing traditional extensive farming systems through training and capacity-building in animal welfare practices and veterinary care thus had a direct and positive impact on women's empowerment.

76. For rural women, animals were an investment and a social safety net. Women knew that it would be more difficult to educate their children or obtain proper health care if their animals were sick or, worse still, if they died. Consequently, the international community should take animal welfare into consideration in the development and implementation of national and international policies aimed at achieving the MDGs.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.

United Nations E/2010/SR.20

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

29 September 2010

Original: English

Substantive session of 2010

Provisional summary record of the 20th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 2 July 2010, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Ali (Malaysia)

Contents

Regional cooperation:

Gender equality and empowerment of women in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals: regional perspectives

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Regional cooperation:

Gender equality and empowerment of women in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals: regional perspectives (E/2010/15, E/2010/15/Add.11, E/2010/16, E/2010/17, E/2010/18, E/2010/19 and E/2010/20)

1. **The President** invited Mr. Ján Kubiš, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe and current Coordinator of the Regional Commissions, to act as moderator for the dialogue with the Executive Secretaries.

2. **Mr. Kubiš** (Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)), moderator, said that the current dialogue was taking place just as a meeting of the General Assembly was about to adopt a resolution establishing the new United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, to be known as UN Women. The theme of the dialogue was also pertinent to the ongoing preparations for the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals, to be held in September, at which the linkage between the MDGs and gender equality and women's empowerment would be discussed in depth. Moreover, General Assembly resolution 64/184 had invited the regional commissions to provide input to the preparatory process and to participate in the High-level Plenary Meeting. The regional commissions were already holding regional consultations and would also organize a side event during the High-level Plenary Meeting.

3. The impact of the global economic and financial crisis and the persistent volatility of commodity prices made sustained economic growth and development a greater challenge in most developing countries and some of the positive trends in MDG achievement were being reversed. The food and fuel crises before it had also had an impact, especially in respect of MDG targets relating to poverty and hunger. Achievements were uneven across countries and regions, with progress being made towards some goals and related indicators while others were lagging behind. Within countries, there were striking disparities between rural and urban areas and different population groups. It was alarming that some goals and indicators relating to the status of women were among those on which the least progress had been achieved. The maternal health situation was particularly serious, with half a million women dying every year from pregnancy-related causes and 85 per cent of those deaths occurring in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. Women also accounted for 70 per cent of the world's poor.

4. **Mr. Janneh** (Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)), accompanying his presentation with computerized slides, said that poverty remained endemic in countries which had not made demonstrable progress in bridging the gaps between men and women in their capacities as actors and beneficiaries of development. National development plans and strategies should recognize and address the gender dimensions of poverty, including skewed access to productive resources.

5. Target 1 of Goal 1 called for halving the number of people living on less than one dollar a day. Currently, 35 countries in Africa (69 per cent) had poverty reduction strategy papers and many of them were engaged in MDG-based planning and costing in line with the 2005 World Summit agenda. Only 16.7 per cent of countries were on course to achieve the target and 33.3 percent were likely to achieve it, while 43.3 percent were unlikely and just under 7 per cent very unlikely to meet it. Poverty in Africa was substantially higher among women, children and young people.

6. Target 2 was to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all. Women and youth accounted for the majority of the unemployed and between 2008 and 2009, unemployment had risen from 8.8 per cent to 11.6 per cent in the region. The employment-to-population ratio was generally higher for men.

7. Target 3 was to halve the proportion of people suffering from hunger. In sub-Saharan Africa, from 33 per cent to 35 per cent of the population was malnourished, with over 70 per cent of the food-insecure population living in rural areas. An estimated one sixth of children died before reaching the age of five years.

8. Goal 2, the achievement of universal primary education, was one of Africa's success stories, as many countries had instituted free, compulsory and universal primary education and some had already achieved parity. Nevertheless, issues of retention and

progression, quality and safety for girls remained key issues. In a few countries, the lower rates of male enrolment were a cause of concern.

9. Turning to Goal 3 on promoting gender equality and the empowerment women, he said that the indicators emphasized education, opportunities for economic participation and political involvement. Eleven countries had achieved parity in secondary education while another five had a gender parity index (GPI) of over 0.90. Eight countries had achieved parity in tertiary education, while most countries had a GPI below 0.50. Eight countries had achieved parity in adult literacy.

10. Data on women's employment in the non-agricultural sector were scarce. Women accounted on average for 25 per cent of public employees, mainly occupying lower-level jobs, and only 8 per cent in the security forces. They predominated in the informal sector.

11. Member countries of the Southern African Development Community and East African Community had made enormous strides towards the 30 per cent target for women's representation in Parliament. In the broader context, there was a lack of equality at the local level in executive, judicial and traditional decision-making.

12. With regard to Goal 4 on reducing child mortality, he said that the health status of children both affected women's productivity and reflected their level of education and ability to afford appropriate medical treatment. The average under-five mortality rate in the region was 166 per 1,000 live births and the worst-performing countries were in Southern and Eastern Africa. Seventeen of the 20 countries with the highest infant mortality rates were in Africa, 7 of them in West Africa.

13. In relation to Goal 5 on improving maternal health, he said that maternal mortality rates remained high, with rates ranging from 840 to 1,000 per 100,000 live births. It was unlikely that many countries would achieve the targets for reducing maternal mortality and providing access to reproductive health services. Unsafe abortions and female genital mutilation were major contributors to maternal mortality. Goals 4 and 5 would be the theme of the African Union Summit to be held in Kampala, Uganda, at the end of July.

14. With regard to Goal 6 on combating HIV/AIDS malaria and other diseases, he noted that women an girls were more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS due t cultural factors and their traditional subordination t men. They were also affected as caregivers and th time spent providing care was not recognized i national income statistics. The HIV/AIDS prevalenc rate among female adults was highest in Souther Africa and lowest in North Africa. Several North an West African countries had maintained comparativel low adult female prevalence rates of 3 per cent o lower. Malaria was the number one cause of morbidit and mortality in most African countries. Althoug insecticide-treated nets had brought some progress, th overall proportion of under-fives treated wit appropriate drugs remained a cause for concern.

15. Turning to Goal 7 on ensuring environmenta sustainability, he said that women and girls were ke actors in household sanitation, water and firewoo collection and food crop farming. The 2010 Africa Development Forum would focus on the issue o climate change, which was not gender-neutral in it impact on rural livelihoods, as it deepened an widened existing gender inequalities in the context o increased water stress and water-related conflict. Th direct impacts included the need for women and girl to walk longer distances to search for water and car for the sick.

16. As for Goal 8 on developing a global partnershi for development, ongoing global processes, whethe North-South or South-South, should pay close attention to gender equality and women' empowerment. According to a recent ECA publicatio on intra-African trade, women's participation in trad was hampered by limitations arising both from thei productive and reproductive roles. The next issue o the *African Women's Report* would be devoted t financing for gender equality in Africa. While externa resource mobilization was essential, it was also important to ensure that domestic resources were allocated to that area. Some countries had launched gender-budgeting initiatives at the national and sectora levels.

17. ECA recommended rigorous accountability on gender issues through commitment to the collection o data disaggregated by sex and to gender mainstreaming in policy design, budgeting, implementation and monitoring. Incentives should be offered to countries making progress with gender equality in the context o

the MDGs. Research was needed on the impact of climate change in all sectors, with emphasis on food security, health, education and migration within the context of gender relations. Gender-responsive budgeting was not only good practice but a legal and moral imperative. It was also important to assess the impact of the persistent brain drain on African health systems.

18. **Ms. Heyzer** (Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)) said that a critical turning point in global development had been reached. Although the Asia and the Pacific region had managed to halve absolute poverty through economic growth, the global economic crisis, following on the heels of the food and fuel crises, was threatening to reverse many of the past decade's hard-won gains. Economic recovery was essential for making real progress towards achieving the MDGs and was only possible with dramatic improvements in gender equality and women's empowerment.

19. The role of Asia and the Pacific in wider global progress towards the MDGs and economic recovery was severely constrained by the costs of gender inequality across the region. Yet the region's economic growth and dynamism were vital to global economic stability and growth as the region was already playing a key role in helping to lead the world out of crisis.

20. Prior to the crisis, the region had been on track towards halving the proportion of the population living below the poverty line. It had made early progress in reducing gender disparities in primary education, in reducing the consumption of ozone-depleting substances, reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS and in increasing access to safe drinking water. However, the crisis had delayed and even reversed some of that progress. In 2009 and 2010, the crisis had trapped an additional 21 million people in extreme poverty. Across the region, an additional 40 million had lost income or food security, with a major impact on progress towards MDGs relating to education and health.

21. Women were disproportionately carrying the burden of those shocks, including the 60 per cent of women in the region who were employed in the informal sector. In South Asia, that proportion was over 80 per cent. Women also carried the burden of social care. If the experience of the 1997 Asian crisis was any indication, there would be a second round of impacts as the loss of women's income affected access to health and education.

22. The economic cost of gender disparities and gaps was being increasingly recognized but progress in addressing them was insufficient. Reducing maternal mortality rates in the region was one of the greatest challenges, with 250,000 mothers dying annually in childbirth or from pregnancy-related complications. Such deaths resulted in a combined $15 million loss in productivity each year in the developing world as a whole.

23. Despite real progress towards universal primary education, gender inequality in education meant that the region still sustained an estimated loss of from $16 billion to $30 billion per year owing to reduced labour productivity and other factors. Women's lack of participation in the formal sector also cost the region billions of dollars every year. Increasing women's employment rates to 70 per cent would increase GDP by from 2 per cent to 4 per cent annually.

24. Prioritization of gender equality and women's empowerment would help to reclaim lost progress towards achievement of the MDGs and economic recovery. The outcomes of the midterm review of the Beijing Platform for Action and the creation of the new gender entity within the United Nations system provided further momentum.

25. Gender equality and empowerment of women were smart economics. Investing in women and girls had a powerful multiplier effect in areas such as productivity, efficiency and economic growth. The same arguments held for social investment in women. Progress in preventing unwanted pregnancies would improve the education of girls and increase employment opportunities for women. Better educated women were healthier, had fewer and healthier children and had higher future earnings.

26. Women's empowerment had to be at the centre of the political and economic decision-making agenda in order to ensure real change. Women in the Asia and Pacific region held fewer seats in parliament than anywhere else in the world except in the Middle East, and four countries had no women lawmakers. Policies and measures were needed to ensure greater participation by women and transparent and fair selection and promotion processes. Parliamentary quotas could help to overcome the imbalance.

27. Gender equality was not solely a women's issue and men were required as partners. Both female and male leadership role models were needed to break down the cultural barriers that undermined the participation and confidence of girls and women.

28. Gender responsiveness in crisis response policies and measures was an immediate priority. Stimulus packages should have a stronger explicit focus on the MDGs, as the 1997 crisis had shown that social recovery took twice as long as economic recovery. The large public works initiated by Governments in the region had mainly created construction jobs for men. Increased investment in social services would provide opportunities for women.

29. The second immediate priority was to engender social protection policies and programmes. Social protection would be the theme of the annual session of ESCAP in 2011. Across the region, only 20 per cent of the unemployed and underemployed had access to labour market programmes and only 30 per cent of older people received pensions. Social protection systems should explicitly address women's life cycle and work-related risks and should be part of long-term investment in inclusive development, with gender equality and women's empowerment as a core driver.

30. The MDGs in themselves were insufficient to transform deeply entrenched gender inequalities. Efforts in all areas should be linked to the wider commitments of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

31. It was time to move forward and take advantage of the opportunities created by the current challenges. If the international community could maximize the synergies between the MDGs and economic recovery using the powerful multiplier effect of gender equality and women's empowerment, it would re-energize the global development agenda and contribute to the building of a more just society for all.

32. **Mr. Kubiš** (Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)), moderator, recalled that MDG regional assessments could be found not only on the websites of regional commissions but also on the regional commissions' joint website. The regional commissions were already engaged in regional consultations to prepare for the High-level Plenary Meeting. A few weeks previously, a major regional forum on the MDGs had been held in Istanbul, Turkey, and an inter-agency report on the MDGs was being finalized.

33. Speaking on behalf of ECE, he said that he would share some findings from the region's midterm review of the Beijing Platform for Action. Educational parity had almost been achieved in the region but Member States should think beyond Goal 3 as there was still a long way to go in implementing the more far-reaching provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the 12 areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action.

34. Gender role stereotypes continued to reproduce entrenched inequalities between men and women and gender gaps were persistently high as women shouldered the bulk of unpaid domestic and care work, with repercussions on their economic independence, life-long earnings and social security. Underrepresented in power and decision-making in all countries of the region, women rarely accounted for more than a third of members of parliament. They held less than a third of managerial positions and accounted for only a quarter of employees. They were overrepresented in low-paid and unpaid work, and gender wage gaps were remarkably resilient.

35. Efforts to combat violence against women were of key relevance to achieving the MDGs. Greater attention should be given to gender dimensions in national poverty reduction and development strategies related to the MDGs. Gender equality, still predominantly seen as a social issue, was not yet sufficiently integrated into economic policymaking. There was a need to strengthen the national mechanisms for gender equality, identifying and addressing the problems they faced and strengthening their capacity for mainstreaming the gender perspective across all policy areas.

36. Effective enforcement of existing legislation, especially in the area of violence against women, remained a key challenge. A broad support base was needed across all levels of government and the judiciary, with the active involvement of civil society. Systematic monitoring, evaluation and accountability were also required, underpinned by evidence-based data collection. Sex-disaggregated statistics were needed so that gender gaps could be measured and policy measures taken to close them. ECE had recently completed a Manual on Developing Gender Statistics.

as part of its efforts to assist member States in obtaining better information on gender equality.

37. Intensified policy efforts were needed to achieve the MDGs and ECE member countries were contributing through financial assistance and bilateral development cooperation. The Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development had reported an increase in development aid in 2009 despite the financial crisis. In 2007/2008, only one fifth of development assistance had been spent on activities with a gender dimension, and less than 3 per cent on activities with an explicit gender equality objective. Regional cooperation, with assistance from the regional commissions, was very important for promoting gender equality and empowerment of women.

38. **Mr. Prado** (Deputy Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)), accompanying his presentation with computerized slides, said that the eradication of extreme poverty was impossible without parallel progress in health, education and gender equality. The statistics showed that women did not have the same level of employment participation or capacity to have their own income. In both urban and rural areas, there were always more women than men without their own income, regardless of age. Women's average share of wage employment in the non-agricultural sector had been rising in the region but very slowly, from 40 per cent in 1990 to 43 per cent in 2007. In some countries it was growing faster, but the gaps persisted.

39. Women's participation in non-agricultural wage employment had grown more in the Caribbean countries than in other areas of the region. Yet there were still many women without their own economic resources. In 1994, 42.8 per cent of women in Latin America had had no income of their own; that figure was currently 31.6 per cent.

40. When women did participate in the labour market, their employment was mostly precarious. In most countries of the region (except in the Dominican Republic and Honduras), women were concentrated mainly in low-productivity jobs, which affected their income, job quality and social security protection. Wage gaps were closing but still existed.

41. As for parity in education, it had already been achieved at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. It was important to improve women's wages and the quality of their employment.

42. The regional average for parliamentary participation was almost the same as the world average: 19 per cent in 2009 for Latin America and a higher percentage in the Caribbean. It was still far from parity and participation was very low in some countries. In the past five years, however, five female Presidents had been elected in the region and many other presidential elections had included women candidates.

43. The eleventh session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean had been held from 13 to 16 July in Brasilia, Brazil, on the theme of "What kind of State? What kind of equality?". The main proposals for discussion had been reform of the links between the basic institutions of society through public policies; the necessary steps to eliminate gender biases in the labour market and overcome the wage gap, segmentation and discrimination; guaranteeing women's rights in the labour market and within the family to promote their economic and physical empowerment and empowerment in all decision-making spheres; and the building of a solid institutional framework with the appropriate regulatory capacity.

44. **Ms. Omer** (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)), Chief of the Commission's Centre for Women, said that Arab and Western Asian countries' efforts to achieve gender equality and empower women had yielded results as diverse as those countries themselves. Among the factors affecting their attainment of the Millennium Development Goals were their vastly different economic capacities, past and present conflicts and, in some cases, political instabilities.

45. With regard to Goal 1 on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, she noted that discriminatory legislation and wage practices, lack of access to resources and cultural barriers in the region were to blame for women's relatively low participation in the labour force — 22 per cent, compared to the world average of 56 per cent. (Non-agricultural wage employment ranged from 11.5 per cent in Bahrain to 22.3 per cent in Morocco, compared to 39 per cent globally.) Young women, in particular, had been hard hit by the after-effects of the 2008 global financial crisis. Although women now had greater access to

higher education, they continued to opt for careers in health and education, extensions of their domestic roles of caring for others. Women must be encouraged to pursue non-traditional careers in the sciences and technology in order to correct the mismatch between their academic training and market demands.

46. It was also crucial to ensure women's right to decent working conditions, including equal pay for equal work; to amend discriminatory tax, social security and pension legislation; and to lift restrictions on women's freedom of movement. Because very few women were members of trade unions and other labour institutions, women were often unaware of their labour rights. Some Arab countries, particularly least developed countries, lacked the necessary infrastructure — such as transportation and day-care facilities for young children — to enable women to enter the labour force.

47. Nonetheless, a number of well-educated women had become successful entrepreneurs running their own businesses, and most Arab countries had signed ILO conventions. Some had recently enacted new labour laws to improve women's access to the labour force and their conditions of work. Lebanon, for example, had abolished restrictions on night work for women in 2000, and in 2004, Morocco had reformed legislation on maternity rights.

48. The Arab region had been very successful in achieving gender parity in education. Some Arab countries had closed the gender gap in primary education enrolment and others, including Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Kuwait and Bahrain, were very close to doing so. Since 1990, youth literacy rates in the region had been climbing as a result of increased school enrolment and primary education survival rates. In the least developed countries, however, enrolment rates for girls (48 per cent) lagged behind that of boys (approximately 60 per cent).

49. Gender disparity was accentuated at higher levels of education, largely because of poverty and also because of distances between school and home, lack of proper sanitary facilities, and, in Iraq and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, lack of security. In rural areas, particularly in least developed countries, girls were needed for household or farm labour, or dropped out of school to marry at an early age.

50. The proportion of women in managerial and decision-making positions in finance-related fields was rising. Since the 1990s, a woman had been appointed Minister of Trade and Industry in Jordan and Minister of Economy and International Cooperation in Egypt. More recently, the United Arab Emirates had appointed its first female Minister for Economic Affairs. The representation of women in national parliaments in the Arab region, however, was the lowest in the world, and far from the 30 per cent recommended in the Beijing Platform for Action. To remedy that situation, Jordan, Tunisia, Sudan, Iraq, Palestine, Morocco and Mauritania had adopted temporary special measures, such as quota systems, resulting in an increase in the number of women in parliaments and on local councils. As a result, by February 2010, female representation in the Iraqi Parliament had been 25 per cent, followed by Tunisia at 22.8 per cent and the United Arab Emirates at 22.5 per cent. That figure reached 27.6 per cent in Tunisia following June elections. For the first time ever, five members of the Kuwaiti Parliament were women.

51. Political parties — which were often the main route to political participation — should adopt temporary special measures to increase women's membership. A growing number of Arab countries, including Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon, had also introduced quotas to encourage women's participation in local elections.

52. Turning to Goal 5 on the improvement of maternal health, she said that the period 1990-2005 had witnessed an overall increase in life expectancy and a drop in fertility in the ESCWA region. Maternal mortality ratios in the region, with the exception of Yemen and Sudan, were estimated to be lower than the world average of 400 deaths per 100,000 live births. Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates had achieved the goal of a 75 per cent or greater reduction in maternal mortality, and in almost all ESCWA countries, the number of births attended by skilled health personnel had increased.

53. In conclusion, she said that despite significant progress in the Arab region, the needs and status of women and girls were still accorded low priority, especially in the least developed countries. Adequate legislation, the integration of a gender perspective in all national policies, enabling machinery and the allocation of sufficient resources were crucial to ensuring that efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals were gender-sensitive.

54. In the area of education, the region's Governments needed to raise the minimum marriage age to improve the school retention rates for girls, particularly at the secondary level; overhaul curricula in order to eliminate discriminatory images and stereotypes; provide a supportive infrastructure (transportation, telecommunications, electricity and water supply) to reduce domestic workload; and launch regional initiatives and financing mechanisms, such as stipends, targeted vouchers and bursaries, to increase the enrolment of poor children in school.

55. To promote women's political participation, Governments which had not yet done so should introduce special temporary measures, such as quota systems, to increase women's representation in national parliaments and at the local level and support training for women in leadership skills, and in practical skills such as campaigning.

56. **Ms. Morales** (Peru) noted that ECLAC initiatives such as the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean had been highly successful and had helped to increase women's participation in political life and decision-making. Nonetheless, huge disparities persisted, not only between men and women, but also between urban women and rural and indigenous women in the areas of health, education and employment.

57. Education was the key to narrowing those gaps. Peru had adopted an Act on Equal Education for Girls, Boys and Adolescents in Rural Areas and an Act on Intercultural Bilingual Education for Indigenous Peoples. The Ministry of Education was also implementing programmes and projects to guarantee quality education for all. Nonetheless, men and women did not have equal access to education, and there were disparities between the rural and urban areas as well.

58. Wage gaps between men and women were another continuing concern. Particularly at a time of financial crisis, efforts must be made to integrate women into the job market, facilitate their access to credit and microcredit and build their entrepreneurial skills. Peru offered women microenterprise loans and provided training in business skills.

59. Countries seeking to provide equal opportunities for men and women could benefit from exchanges of experience and international cooperation. She wished to ask the Deputy Executive Secretary of ECLAC how the countries of that region could strengthen South-South cooperation mechanisms for the purpose of achieving gender equality.

60. **Mr. Rosenthal** (Guatemala) expressed appreciation for the work of all the regional commissions and in particular, the support that ECLAC had long provided to the Latin American and Caribbean region. He urged the Council to accord the dialogue with the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions its proper place in the agenda of future sessions, allowing sufficient time for a meaningful exchange between the Executive Secretaries and the intergovernmental machinery.

61. **Mr. Kubiš** (Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)), supported the proposal made by the representative of Guatemala, echoing his call for a genuine and in-depth dialogue.

62. **Mr. Al-Seedi** (Iraq) said that, under the Iraqi Constitution, 25 per cent representatives in Parliament must be women, and that, in all walks of life, Iraqi women were represented at executive and decision-making levels, including as ministers and deputy ministers.

63. **Mr. Bidounga** (Congo) expressed concern at the figures cited by the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa regarding the region's prospects for attaining the Millennium Development Goals. Like other African countries emerging from conflict, the Congo faced a number of obstacles to meeting the Millennium Development Goals and was dependent on global partnerships and assistance from the international community in order to achieve them. Having reached the completion point under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) during the current year, it had managed to reduce its foreign debt stock significantly; however, it had received next to no Official Development Assistance (ODA), had no national aid policy in place and had not acceded to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness until 2009. Despite its oil resources, it was a middle-income country with no fixed parity between its currency and the euro, and it faced difficulties in attracting the kind of foreign aid and investment that would help it to diversify its economy

64. As the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals drew near, his country continued to wrestle with obstacles to achieving the MDGs. Referring to Goal 1 on poverty

eradication, he said that despite an economic upturn, 70 per cent of the Congolese people were still living at the poverty line in the aftermath of the conflict there. With regard to Goal 2 on access to primary education, he said that the destruction of infrastructure during the conflict had affected school enrolment.

65. As for Goal 3 on gender equality and empowerment of women, social constraints persisted in the Congo, despite a strengthened legal framework, the work of civil society organizations for the advancement of women and the multifaceted support of development partners. The adoption of a national gender policy in 2008 had been a major stride.

66. With the aim of reducing maternal and child mortality (Goal 5), Congolese authorities had made every effort to reconstruct health centres destroyed in the conflict; to make medicines, including antiretroviral treatment and insecticide-treated mosquito nets, available to the population at low cost or free of charge; and to provide special protection to children under 15 years of age and pregnant women.

67. In the past decade, his Government had devoted significant attention to ensuring environmental sustainability (Goal 7) in view of the Congo's special place in the global ecosystem, but with limited success, as its institutional framework was not capable of integrated management of environmental issues. However, Government initiatives to disseminate information on biodiversity and climate change had raised national actors' awareness of the principle of sustainable development.

68. **Mr. Yakovenko** (Russian Federation) said that the Russian Federation attached great importance to the activity of the regional economic commissions and supported a further strengthening of their coordinating role and active use of their experience in preparing global strategies for economic and social development, including on gender issues.

69. As the commissions had regulatory, advisory and operational functions, they were the best adapted to specific regional conditions and therefore had unique opportunities for helping countries to address their current national or international problems.

70. All of the work of the commissions was related directly or indirectly to enhancing women's role in society, while issues of development assistance and achievement of the MDGs continued to be of paramount importance. The intergovernmental nature of the regional commissions and the capacity of member countries to determine their priorities were a guarantee of the effectiveness of regional cooperation.

71. The Russian Federation was a member of two regional commissions, ECE and ESCAP, and provided them with political, expert and financial support, including an annual voluntary contribution of 1.2 billion dollars each. The Russian Federation was also considering participation in the work of ECA and ECLAC.

72. He commended the efforts of ECE and ESCAP to develop transport and infrastructure, which were important tools for stimulating economic growth, trade development and the strengthening of regional integration.

73. The regional commissions played a special role in coordination on traffic safety issues, as recognized in General Assembly resolution 64/255. The work of the regional commissions on energy was also very important, as energy security and effectiveness were currently the key factors in providing sustainable and dynamic growth in the global economy. The regional commissions shared their experiences and transferred energy-saving technologies and took part in intergovernmental efforts to harmonize the regulatory and legal basis of energy security. In conclusion, the Russian Federation would provide the regional commissions with all possible assistance to further increase the effectiveness of their activities.

74. **Mr. Herawan** (Observer for Indonesia) said that his country was well on track to meet Goal 3, which, it believed, also carried a responsibility to guarantee women a healthy and safe environment at home and at work and equal opportunities in the labour market. Urging the international community to support countries' efforts to achieve Goal 5 on improving maternal health, he said that his delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's Joint Action Plan for Women's and Children's Health. In anticipation of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly to review the Millennium Development Goals, Indonesia would be hosting a Special Ministerial Meeting for MDG Review for Asian and Pacific countries in Jakarta on 3 and 4 August.

75. **Ms. Herd** (National Right to Life Educational Trust Fund) said that, as a registered obstetric nurse with over 44 years of experience, she felt strongly that

unless Goal 5 on maternal health was fulfilled, all the other Millennium Development Goals would be out of reach and the world would be no better off than it had been 10 years earlier when the Goals were first conceived.

76. It was difficult to understand why women in the developing world had not been provided the proper health care when the medical community had known for 70 years how to save their lives and, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), 87 per cent of maternal deaths were preventable. Although maternal mortality rates had decreased since the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo, they were still unacceptably high.

77. The international community seemed more concerned about decreasing the birth rate than making delivery safe, but women could never be empowered or enjoy gender equality if they were dead.

78. **Ms. Brichta** (Brazil) said that in the year marking the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Inter-American Year of Women, her Government would be hosting the eleventh session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. From 13 to 16 July, some 800 women from all over the region would be meeting in Brasília to take stock of the progress achieved since the adoption of the Quito Consensus, and to identify common strategies for addressing bottlenecks in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Conference would focus on the economic empowerment of women and women in situations of natural disaster, relief and reconstruction, particularly in Haiti and Chile.

79. **Mr. Tommo Monthe** (Cameroon) reassured the Executive Secretaries that the Council attached great importance to engaging in a genuine dialogue with them, and suggested that they might also work with the Council more closely through the Committee for Programme and Coordination, which met regularly with the regional commissions in its detailed consideration of their programmes and subprogrammes. He expressed support for the observation by the representative of Guatemala regarding the effectiveness of the dialogue and for his request that it be assigned its proper place in the Council's programme of work. General Assembly resolution 32/197 establishing that the regional commissions should be the main general economic and social development centres with the United Nations system for their respective regions remained valid.

80. Expressing concern at the statistics cited by Mr. Janneh in his presentation and in his "Repositioning Africa" exercise, he asked how efforts to achieve the MDGs in Africa could be redoubled beyond the many initiatives already taken, particularly within the context of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

81. **Ms. Renford** (Observer for Israel) said that Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation (*Mashav*) was engaged in a joint project with the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to foster women's entrepreneurship in Central Asia and the Caucasus region within the framework of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) region. The project was a tool for the empowerment of women and was helping to create jobs and economic opportunities for them.

82. As a partner in the Young Americas Business Trust supported by the Organization of American States (OAS), Israel conducted "business labs" that had provided training to 22,000 persons from 29 countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region, including youth and indigenous women. Israel looked forward to strengthening its cooperation with those organizations and other stakeholders in order to address challenges to achieving gender equality and the Millennium Development Goals.

83. **Mr. Janneh** (Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)) expressed strong support for the proposal put forward by the representative of Guatemala and supported by Cameroon concerning the place of the dialogue in the Council's agenda. The statistics he had presented did indeed look bleak, but only if current trends continued, and he was hoping they would not.

84. He welcomed initiatives by the Congo and other African countries to draft MDG-based poverty reduction strategy papers and national development strategies, which were already bearing fruit. Prior to the global economic crisis, Africa had been hoping to increase its growth rate to at least 7 or 8 per cent. While it remained ambitious and was continuing its efforts to plan effectively and manage its development

resources, it needed additional support to keep up that momentum. In that connection, he welcomed the G-8 and G-20 dialogue with Africa during the Toronto Summit, held in June, and the pledge of $5 billion in assistance for maternal child health.

85. In conclusion, he said that NEPAD was still a very credible programme and was reorganizing in line with Africa's determination to scale up development efforts and make significant progress towards achieving the MDGs.

86. **Ms. Heyzer** (Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)), thanked Indonesia for its active participation in ESCAP and for co-hosting a major meeting on infrastructure development earlier in the year. In August, the region's ministerial meeting to review progress in achieving the MDGs would be held in Jakarta. She also wished to thank the Russian Federation for supporting the work of ESCAP in the areas of transport, energy and statistics. Its assistance with regard to intermodal transport was especially critical for the landlocked developing countries and least developed countries.

87. Turning to the question on maternal health, she said that not all women in the developing world were dying after delivery. Those who suffered that fate were mainly poor women in rural and remote areas because of a lack of investment in rural infrastructure and health-care systems and the undervaluation of women and girls. Putting that issue on the political agenda was critical to moving forward.

88. She echoed support for the comments by the representative of Guatemala and other delegations, highlighting the coordination function of the regional commissions in bringing together the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and the unique perspective that came of looking at global issues through a regional prism. The regional commissions also had greater capacity to interface with subregional organizations and in many instances, regional cooperation could help to accelerate development at the country level. For example, ESCAP identified countries on track to achieve the MDGs and those that were not; it also analysed development disparities within on-track countries and encouraged communities that had made progress to assist those that were lagging behind. She therefore welcomed the Council's new emphasis on regional commissions.

89. **Mr. Prado** (Deputy Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)), responding to the representative of Peru, said that effective cooperation required knowledge, political will, resources and sound policies capable of changing the situation in the region. All ECLAC divisions, particularly its Division for Gender Affairs had channelled their knowledge into the creation of the Gender Equality Observatory.

90. As for political will, the forthcoming Conference in Brasilia would provide an occasion for States to affirm their commitment to reducing gender gaps in the region and to contributing adequate resources to that end.

91. **Ms. Omer** (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)), praised Iraq for rising above its situation to make significant accomplishments. Iraq continued to lead in the representation of women in Parliament.

92. As for the need to make conscious choices to reduce maternal mortality, she said that results could be achieved in a short time if adequate resources were committed to it and if it was viewed as a priority. In the majority of the States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, for example, the maternal mortality rate was now close to zero.

93. **Mr. Kubiš** (Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe), moderator, thanked all participants in the dialogue — the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions as well as Council members and observers. Many of the points raised had broad relevance beyond the work of any specific regional commission.

94. The statement by the representative of the Russian Federation had highlighted the need to create a better platform for ongoing interaction with delegations in New York on issues of interest, such as energy. He also wished to thank the representative of Israel for describing concrete initiatives, including a joint project with his own regional commission.

95. The five regional commissions appreciated the comments and guidance of Council members and very much valued the opportunity to hold a dialogue with them. Since they were the ones on the ground and the face of the United Nations to the people, they would be grateful for a longer exchange with the Council and a more prominent place in its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.